

# ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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For immediate release

- 1. Air quality advisory lifted**
- 2. City of Hedrick works to maintain water supply after well pump failure**

## **AIR QUALITY ADVISORY LIFTED**

DES MOINES — An air quality advisory was allowed to expire today at 11 a.m., as air quality improved across western and central Iowa. Morning pollution levels remained elevated at monitors in Linn, Scott, Clinton and Van Buren counties due to an overnight thermal inversion, but air quality is improving as the day progresses.

Yesterday, particulate pollution levels across large areas of Iowa and the Upper Midwest was elevated with Air Quality Index readings in the 90s across much of the state and 111 in Polk County. An AQI of 101 and higher is considered unhealthy for sensitive groups.

On Tuesday, the Air Quality Index measured 119 in Linn County, 113 in Polk County, 108 in Clinton County, 107 in Scott County and 104 in Palo Alto County. Surrounding areas experienced similar levels. Other areas of Iowa experienced elevated, but moderate pollution levels. Widespread areas of the Upper Midwest, Great Lakes and Ohio Valley experienced similar conditions.

Particulate matter is a generic term to describe microscopic sized soots and aerosols that can penetrate the deepest parts of the lungs, posing increased likelihood of symptoms in sensitive individuals, including children, the elderly and those with heart and lung disease when engaged in prolonged outdoor activities such as exercise.

Particles are directly released when coal, gasoline, diesel fuels and wood are burned. Particles also form from chemical reactions of nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, organic compounds and ammonia.

Hazy skies are often associated with higher particulate levels, which scatter light in the atmosphere. Particulate pollution can form year-round, unlike summertime ozone smog, which requires hot, sunny conditions.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) reports pollution levels using a color-coded and numerical range for pollutants. The higher the AQI, the poorer the air quality. An AQI of 1 to 50 is green or good, 51 to 100 is yellow or moderate, 101 to 150 is orange or unhealthy for sensitive groups, 151 to 200 is red, unhealthy for everyone. Rarely monitored are purple for very unhealthy (201 to 300) and maroon for hazardous (301 to 500.)

Iowa's air quality still meets federal health standards, but an increase in the number or severity of days with unhealthy air could pose clean up efforts. Iowa typically has several days of unhealthy air annually.

**For more information, contact Brian Button with the Department of Natural Resources at 515-281-7832.**

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## **CITY OF HEDRICK WORKS TO MAINTAIN WATER SUPPLY AFTER WELL PUMP FAILURE**

HEDRICK — Quick action and a call to the DNR helped one city recently restore clean drinking water to its residents after a mechanical failure threatened the city's water supply.

Last week, the main well pump failed in Hedrick, a southeast Iowa town of about 800 people. The Saturday pump failure caused the water tower to lose pressure, meaning no new water was being sent to the tower. By 10 p.m., the water remaining in the tower had been used, and the entire town of Hedrick was left without water.

Besides cutting off a town's water supply, a loss of pressure event like the one in Hedrick can also create a risk for negative pressure to draw contaminated water into the system.

When the main well pump failed, the city's drinking water operator called the DNR for technical assistance and help in notifying the public. Cities are required to notify the DNR when a loss of pressure event occurs.

"Public notice is essential for protecting residents' health in these situations," said Bill Wyer, an environmental specialist in the DNR's water supply operations section who helped assist the Hedrick water operator and city clerk. "This was a cooperative effort in getting the word out to people."

A well driller was called to the site to install a spare pump that Hedrick had available on site, and the pump went into service at about 5 a.m. Sunday.

“The fact that Hedrick had a backup plan and a spare pump available was critical in restoring water in a timely manner,” Wyer said.

The city began pumping water back to the water tower and by Monday morning pressure had been restored.

Precautionary steps were taken to ensure the quality of the drinking water once the system came back online. The city flushed the system and raised chlorine levels to kill any possible contamination in the water system. Water samples were taken, and while officials waited for test results, residents were instructed to boil water or use bottled water. The boil order was lifted Wednesday.

“The City of Hedrick did the right thing by calling the DNR and asking for assistance,” Wyer said. “We were able to work together to re-pressurize the water supply and ensure the health of the city’s residents.”

**For more information, contact Bill Wyer at (515) 725-0339.**